

theme may be changed according to instructions from a game server, e.g., as described in U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/225,407 (Attorney docket no. IGT1P237/P-1051A), filed on Sep. 12, 2005 and entitled "METHODS AND DEVICES FOR MANAGING GAMING NETWORKS" (the "SBG Application"), which is hereby incorporated by reference for all purposes.

**[0012]** However, such multi-game machines typically have the same exterior artwork, top glass and belly glass for whichever game is selected, such that these display items tend to be fairly generic in nature on such machines. It is not practical to have a single multi-game machine with standard silk-screened glasses and other permanent displays that reflect, for example, both an "Elvis" themed game and a "Star Wars" themed game available on the same machine.

**[0013]** Although the issue of variable visual displays has been partially addressed through recent introductions of secondary and even tertiary video screens, such video screens tend to be relatively expensive and event-driven media-slave devices, the use of which results in a need for substantial associated memory or storage units and the additional power and space required to accommodate such displays and units. Furthermore, these added video screens are limited in that they are restricted to a single video image source (sometimes referred to herein as a "host") within the gaming machine itself, such as the MGC or an associated video control slave chip, and can only display that which has already been programmed into the host or any of its associated memory units. As a result, any newly desired game or display changes in a deployed machine still results in the need for undesirable retrofitting and/or software upgrades and updates.

**[0014]** In view of the above observations, it would be desirable to provide a visual display for a gaming machine that reduces the expense and inconvenience of updating thematic displays on the gaming machine. It would also be desirable to provide displays with increased flexibility.

#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

**[0015]** Novel methods, devices and systems are described for forming displays and creating environments in a casino. Some implementations of the invention provide configurable gaming machine skins, which may be formed from electronic paper or the like. Casino environments may be created in accordance with a game theme and/or to indicate one or more groups of players. The environment may include configurable surfaces of gaming machines and/or nearby surfaces, such as walls, floors and ceilings. Preferably, some or all of these features may be changed automatically when a game theme changes.

**[0016]** Some implementations of the invention provide an interactive, immersive gaming environment that may include group bonus events, changeable environments, etc. Groups and/or sub-groups (such as teams of players) may be indicated by distinctive differences between gaming machines and/or other aspects of the environment. For example, the walls, ceiling, signage and/or floor of an area may correspond with a particular game theme for which the gaming machines in the area are configured to provide. Within this area, there may be teams indicated, e.g., by different colors. Some such implementations include a projection display system and/or an audio system that has been

configured and programmed according to methods described herein. For example, displays may be projected onto the ceiling, walls, or floor of a gaming area. Some such displays may be controlled by interactive gesture-based systems.

**[0017]** Some implementations of the invention provide an electronically configurable table for playing table games. An operator may select a desired game, such as a poker game or a blackjack game, and the table will be automatically configured with geometrical patterns, text, etc., which are appropriate for the desired table game. The desired type of table game may be selected by a control on the table itself or according to instructions received from, e.g., a server or a casino manager via a network interface. In some preferred embodiments, electronic paper provides an electronically configurable surface for the table. Alternatively, or additionally, displays may be projected onto the underside of a translucent gaming surface. The table games may be conducted by a dealer or by using some form of automation, which may include, e.g., cameras and/or radio frequency identification devices, etc.

**[0018]** Some implementations of the invention involve a gaming machine that includes various devices for providing wagering games and game displays, including one or more logic devices. At least some of the game displays may be provided by one or more configurable surfaces. The game displays may be associated with game themes and may comprise static and/or dynamic displays. The configurable surfaces may, in some implementations, continue to display an image even when power is removed.

**[0019]** The gaming machine may also include one or more devices for receiving an indication to change a game theme and a game display. For example, the gaming machine may include a user interface for receiving an indication to change a game theme from a player, a technician, etc.

**[0020]** Alternatively, or additionally, the gaming machine may include an interface (e.g., a network interface) for receiving an indication to change a game theme from another device. The other device could be, for example, an environment controller, another gaming machine, a server, a host device, etc. Gaming machines that include a network interface may be configured to receive software, e.g., for providing wagering games, via the network interface. Moreover, such gaming machines may be configured to receive instructions for providing wagering games and/or instructions for presenting game displays via the network interface.

**[0021]** The gaming machine may also be configured to cooperate with at least one other device to present game theme displays on one or more surfaces outside of the gaming machine. The surface(s) outside of the gaming machine may comprise one or more surfaces of another gaming machine and/or one or more surfaces of an environment near the gaming machine. The one or more surfaces outside of the gaming machine may comprise one or more configurable surfaces and/or surfaces on which displays are projected. For example, the one or more surfaces outside of the gaming machine may comprise a wall surface, a floor surface, a ceiling surface and/or a sign surface.

**[0022]** The gaming machine is preferably configured to control one or more configurable surfaces of the gaming machine to present a first game theme display, e.g., when configured for providing (or at least offering) a wagering